

Star 80 is just a ball of gas—an offensive one at that



Star 80
by Bob Fosse
and *Scarface*
by Brian DePalma

Review by R.F. Macdonald

Bob Fosse's *Star 80* is a pretty bad movie. It intends to be some kind of pseudo-documentary on a controversial subject—delivering a moral decision. Instead, it simply glorifies the subject—the reverse of its intention.

In short, it is a false piece of trash that purports to be a moral exposé and ends up a cheap thrill.

This seems to be a disturbing new trend in American cinema. *Scarface* also exhibited these characteristics: Partly based on fact, these movies depict a very desirable lifestyle that the directors say they want to condemn while the actual film says the reverse.

The main problem is one of identification. The protagonists in both films are struggling everymen who have no particular talent. They are very much wounded males, confused by the new assertiveness of women; they are also simply not very well adjusted to anything.

However, Fosse and DePalma have seen fit to try to make you identify with these characters through the use of filmic techniques such as close-ups and flashbacks. Hence, when Eric Roberts and/or Al Pacino struggle, you become emotionally involved.

Now this technique is fine for *Star Wars* or *Walt Disney* where the filmmakers' subject matter is

less delicate and its intentions more easily understood, but in the case of *Star 80* and *Scarface* it leads to the worst kind of moral relativism.

The saddest thing is the stature of the directors. DePalma's last film was *Blow Out*, an extraordinary piece that blended political intrigue with technological suspense and resulted in a tart essay on contemporary ethics and the art of filmmaking itself.

Predictably, it bombed and DePalma was forced to look at some more commercial properties, namely an update of the old Howard Hawkes gangster film, *Scarface*.

Perhaps to assuage some guilt for making what is essentially a blatantly mercenary foray into an almost continuous flow of gratuitous violence and big bucks (*Scarface* certainly can't be called much of a movie), DePalma has made some noises to the effect that he intends the film to show the evils of unrestrained Capitalism.

Of course, that DePalma has delivered a product that conforms exactly to what some marketing agent pontificates (in other words, what people will identify with) shows just how quickly an esteemed director will sell out.

It wouldn't be so bad if he simply admitted that for financial considerations he is making a commercial picture. Instead, he has to justify his abattoir with abhorrent Liberal relativism.

Fosse's *Star 80* is worse because the subject—pornography—involves more people and is therefore more immediate. Also it is based on a true story published in, you guessed it, the hysterically wacky, "anything goes", liberal *Village Voice*.

Once upon a time, Bob Fosse made a really great movie based on true stories by Christopher

Isherwood. *Cabaret* may have starred Liza Minnelli but it was still a great film. Unfortunately, Bob also made *All That Jazz*, which was the most egocentrically self-indulgent movie ever made until *Yentl* (which I could hear occasionally seeping through the cinema walls—no wonder I'm in such a bad mood).

Basically speaking, Fosse is an important director who is rapidly becoming an unimportant director. This unfortunate fact becomes excruciatingly apparent when you see (and I advise that you don't) *Star 80*.

There are one or two good things about the film, namely Mariel Hemingway and Cliff Robertson. Hemingway has suffered some criticism for her understated performance. Personally I think she was perfectly cast and was convincing in the role of Dorothy Stratten, the doomed centrefold.

Cliff Robertson portrays Hugh Hefner with an acute air of fatherly manipulation.

Eric Roberts is a problem as the protagonist because you identify with him yet he is convincingly repulsive; a good acting job, yes, but under very bad direction. If I had been Roberts I would have disobeyed orders.

The film is slick and glossy (wrong approach) and the editing and framing are conventional, if a little overly eager to please. In other words *Star 80* is clean product.

Unfortunately, it is an offensive failure. Martin Scorsese made a film in 1980 called *Raging Bull* that treats the issue of masculine achievement and failure much more concisely. The violence and sex are never gratuitous, rather they are controlled when necessary. You observe Robert De Niro, you never identify with him. So why, Fosse and DePalma, do bad arabesques on Scorsese?

CKDU DAL RADIO STAY TUNED FOR

CKDU ALTERNATIVE THIRTY
27 January - 10 February 1984

WOC	LC	TC	ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL
4	1	1	The Palace At 4am=	Untamed World	Collective
2	-	2	Nina Hagen	Angstlos	Ego
2	-	3	Cocteau Twins	Garlands	CBS (Neth)
2	-	4	Public Image, Ltd.	Live in Tokyo	Envelope
6	2	5	Klaus Nomi	Simple Man	(UK)
2	-	6	Siouxsie And The Banshees	Nocturne	Virgin (UK)
2	-	7	The Cramps	Smell of Female	RCA
10	10	8	Bodeens=	Live	Polydor (UK)
2	-	9	David Bowie	Ziggy Stardust Soundtrack	Enigma (US)
4	4	10	Eva Everything=	Boob Tube	-tape-
2	-	11	Blaire Petrie=	NREP	RCA
2	-	12	20th Century Rebels	Rebellion	Great Shakes
2	-	13	Public Image, Ltd.	This Is Not A Love Song (EP)	OBFU
2	-	14	Realists=	Marianne (cassette EP)	Rebellion
2	-	15	Cabaret Voltaire	Johnny Yesno	Virgin (UK)
14	5	16	Euthenetics=	Euthenetics (cassette EP)	-tape-
6	7	17	Rational Youth=	In Your Eyes (EP)	Capitol
6	16	18	Breeding Ground=	Reunion (EP)	Fringe
4	6	19	Kraftwerk	Tour de France (EP)	Warner
2	-	20	Durutti Column	Another Setting	Factory
2	-	21	Peter And The Old People=	Peter And The Old People	Enigma (US)
4	3	22	Clock DVA	Advantage	-tape-
4	17	23	The Coconuts	Don't Take My Coconuts	Polydor
8	11	24	UB40	Labour Of Love	EMI
8	14	25	English Beat	What Is	Virgin
4	8	26	Blue Peter=	Version (EP)	IRS
4	24	27	Minutes From Downtown=	Minutes From Downtown	Ready
4	28	28	Howard Devoto	Jerky Versions Of The Dream	Capitol
2	-	29	Butthole Surfers	Butthole Surfers	IRS (US)
2	-	30	Crass	Yessir, I Will	Alternative Tentacles (US)

*:Canadian/WOC:weeks on chart/LC:last week/TC:this chart

Compiled by John MacMaster, Music Director

CLASSIC ROCK

Tuesday, February 14, 6-8 p.m.:
Frank Zappa with John MacMaster (part IV)

Thursday, February 16, 6-8 p.m.:
The Kinks with Kristin Singer (part III)

HOT OFF THE PRESSES

Monday, February 13, 8-9 p.m.:
David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture with Danny Banfield

Wednesday, February 15, 8-9 p.m.:
Cocteau Twins' Garlands and **Head Over Heels** with Thom Mason

IN CONCERT

Tuesday, February 14, 8-9 p.m.:
Blancmange and **Hot Chocolate**